

Navy medical officer awarded honorary doctorate from Republic of Georgia

TBILISI, Republic Of Georgia (Feb. 6, 2006) -- Navy Capt. John A. Perciballi, the Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program U.S. Task Force medical officer, was recently awarded an honorary doctorate degree by the Tbilisi State Medical University in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia.

Perciballi received the rare distinction because of the lecture series on combat medicine he gave at the university.

"It was a surprise to me," Perciballi stated. The honorary degree is an added distinction; however, Perciballi earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Vermont and his medical doctorate from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, in Bethesda, Md.

Perciballi, who gave 11 lectures, was awarded the degree by the TSMU director during a formal ceremony.

"The idea came from the director and his faculty of the university," said Dr. Joseph Maisuradze, a specialist in resuscitation and external medicine at TSMU. "I was very glad to see this happen."

"Everyone on the faculty approved of the idea of awarding Dr. Perciballi an honorary degree," Maisuradze stated.

"I have attended all of the lectures and I find them very interesting and informative, especially because I work on the faculty of Critical External Medicine, formally called Military Medicine," said Maisuradze. "Critical medicine is very close to military medicine."

One of the Georgian Army doctors who participated in the GSSOP training at the Krtsanisi Training Area was responsible for the initial meeting between Perciballi and Misolrevi. "Dr. Perciballi was introduced to me by my former student Mr. Gongliashvili, who worked in Krtsanisi Training Area as a doctor," Maisuradze elaborated.

Perciballi's role in Georgia includes direct medical support to the GSSOP U.S. Task Force and medical training for Georgian troops.

"My stated mission is to provide medical support for the GSSOP Marines participating in this mission. There's quite a few live-fire exercises and we're here for any contingencies that may arise," said Perciballi. "An enhancement to that is we also took on the training mission, training the Georgian troops in elements of combat medicine as they transition from the old Soviet system to the NATO system."

Part of the GSSOP Task Force mission is to assist and enhance Georgia's capability to sustain its contribution to the effort in Iraq.

"After reporting aboard here for the GSSOP program I went to the medical school and talked with their head of Extreme Medicine about a combat medicine lecture series," said Perciballi.

"They were very interested in combat medicine because with this war on terrorism, those principles are now very important to our civilian community," he added. "They're very interested in what we've done in the Gulf War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Perciballi is an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran who worked on a number of combat related injuries in the opening stages of OIF.

"I was the officer in charge of Forward Resuscitative Surgical System Team Number Four. I was deployed during the mobile phase of the war in March 2003," said Perciballi. "I was mostly with Task Force Tarawa. My area of operations was in the southern part of Iraq, Camp Viper, Camp Chesty and Camp Anderson."

Perciballi has also been helping the school staff create a new curriculum for combat surgery and combat medicine.

According to Maisuradze, Perciballi's lecture series is the bases for a significant portion of TSMU's developing curriculum. "We now are developing training courses for students and doctors based on material given by Dr. Perciballi," Maisuradze said.

Perciballi opened the GSSOP Medical facility to the medical school senior faculty to show them what a Mobile Medical System with the latest medical technology looks like. The GSSOP Medical facility is a combination of a sick call and laboratory building and an MMS and boasts everything from mobile generators to a portable digital x-ray machine.

As with all Marine led operations, the GSSOP is at the cutting edge of 21st century warfare doctrine and is a foreshadow of the Foreign Military Training Unit of the newly formed Marine Special Operations Command being added to U.S. Special Operations Command.

Perciballi's work with TMU is a clear illustration of how U.S. personnel working with foreign militaries have a strong tendency become involved in the greater well fare of the host nations they are working in.

Perciballi's lecture series, while not specifically outlined in the GSSOP mission, was nevertheless in keeping with the spirit of GSSOP that is ultimately for the U.S. to help its friend Georgia in achieving peace and stability in the Caucus region and victory in the war on terror.

<http://www.marines.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/main5/E43E155BA63D9C0B8525710F00292571?opendocument>